THE CAMBRIDGE STATISTICS DISCUSSION GROUP

Monday 3rd November 2025 7:00 for 7:30
Please note earlier start time
The Statistical Laboratory,
Centre for Mathematical Sciences,
Wilberforce Road, Cambridge, CB3 0WB

Benefits of data openness in a digital world

Sam Gilbert
Bennett Institute for Public Policy

Abstract: We are at a moment of extreme pessimism about data with news stories implicating social media and mobile phones in cyberespionage. To many this is a worrying state of affairs but are we worrying too much? In this talk I will argue that data openness and data-drive advertising are good things and are misunderstood. In particular data-driven advertising is not about controlling behaviour but involves targeting groups of people which brings economic benefits. Internet search data has been used to meet public health challenges such as providing insights into Zika and Ebola. I will argue we should be targeting the distribution of digital power rather than concerning ourselves with business models of particular companies.

Speaker: Sam Gilbert is an entrepreneur and researcher working at the intersection of politics and technology. An expert in data-driven marketing, Sam was Employee No.1 and Chief Marketing Officer at Bought By Many, the multi-award winning fintech ranked No. 13 in The Sunday Times TechTrack100. Previously, he was Head of Strategy and Development at Experian, and Head of Consumer Finance at Santander. He holds an MPhil with distinction in International Relations and Politics from the University of Cambridge, and a BA with first class honours in Modern History and English from the University of Oxford. He is the author of "Good Data: An Optimist's Guide to Our Digital Future".

Directions: The main entrance is reached from Clarkson Road by going along the footpath to the right of the Newton Institute, and turning left through the gatehouse towards the main building (Pavilion A), which has a glass front and a curved grassed roof. The main entrance is in the middle of the glass front. Coffee before the talk will be in the common room in Pavilion D, and the talk will be in Meeting Room 4 in Pavilion A. Free parking is available after 5pm on Clarkson and Wilberforce Roads.

Provisional Next Meetings (2025):
26th November – Riikka Hofmann (Faculty of Education) on '100 years of educational trials – no significant difference?'
3rd February 2026 – Nick Galwey (formerly GlaxoSmithKline) on 'Connecting the False Discovery Rate to shrunk estimates'.
11th?? March – Paul Fannon (Department of Genetics: Bioinformatics Training Facility) on 'How can the pedagogy of statistics inform the teaching of machine learning?'
16th April – Daniela De Angelis (Biostatistics) on 'Real-time nowcasting and forecasting of COVID-19 dynamics in England'.

Supper: Some members eat regularly in Wetherspoons (St Andrew's Street) before each meeting at **5-15pm**. Feel free to join them.
Subscriptions: of 1 pound are now due for attending the 2025-2026 session.
Secretary: Peter Watson, MRC Cognition and Brain Sciences Unit, 15 Chaucer Road, Cambridge CB2 7EF; telephone 01223 769479; E-mail peter.watson@mrc-cbu.cam.ac.uk.

Slides and .mp3 files of old talks: http://www.mrc-cbu.cam.ac.uk/people/peter.watson/csdg.html

Approved Minutes of Annual General Meeting 2023-2024

The Annual General Meeting for the year 2023-2024 was held at the Cognition and Brain Sciences Unit on 8th October 2024. Present: Peter Watson (in chair), Rajenki Das, Liz Gardener, Wendi Qian, Fabio Rigat, Adam Wagner, Jinghuo Zhu. **Apologies:** David Culliford, David Galloway, Mary Garratt, April Le. The **minutes** of the previous A.G.M. were circulated and approved. The secretary reported a total attendance over 5 meetings of 56 for the 2023-2024 session. He mentioned his intention to stand down as secretary at the end of the 2025-2026 session and invited anyone interested in the position to informally contact him. Possible suggestions for future hosting of the CSDG talks webpages and paper archive of talks going back to 1996 were invited and also possible places to donate any funds held by CSDG in the event of no-one coming forward and the group closing.

Treasurer's Accounts and Report 2023-2024:
The CSDG started the year in October 2023 with £92.83 cash in addition to £255.38 (plus interest) in the Cambridge Building Society. The table below shows the financial activity during the most recent year of talks (Oct23 to May24).

Expenditure		**Income**	
Speakers' expenses and account update	£50.27	Balance at Sep 2023	£92.83
Added to Bank a/c		Subscriptions	£19.00

Cash balance at 1st October 2023 £92.83, cash remaining 1st May 2024 £61.56. There is now £255.38 (plus interest) in a Community account at the Cambridge Building Society. The account holders are Peter Watson (current chair & secretary) and Adam Wagner (current treasurer). These names can be changed on application. The principle holder is the treasurer. Any of the account holders can deposit and withdraw money. It is suggested subscriptions remain at £1 for the 2024-2025 session.

Election of officers and committee:. Committee for 2024-2025: *chair* & *secretary* Peter Watson; *treasurer* Adam Wagner; *officio* vacant; *ordinary* Haidee Philpott, Jayantha Ratnayake, Tony Sabin.

Any Other Business: None.

Draft Minutes of Annual General Meeting 2024-2025

The Annual General Meeting for the year 2024-2025 was held at the Cognition and Brain Sciences Unit on 7th October 2025. Present: Peter Watson (in chair), David Arnold, Sarah Kaatuna Crockford, Tim Drye, Helena Earl, Margaret Ely, Mary Garratt, Qi Guo, Simon Hon, Stephen Kaptoge, Radek Lach, I Lam Leong, Jiayi Lin, Florian Markowetz, Tommy Nyberg, Picogour Olga(?), Jayantha Ratnayake, Shreyas Ravishankar, Gavin Robertson, Rosemary Tate, Xinyu Zhu. **Apologies:** Amir Jalili, Agnieszka Lemanska. The **minutes** of the previous A.G.M. were circulated and approved. The secretary reported a total attendance over 6 meetings of 91 for the 2024-2025 session. **He mentioned his intention to stand down as secretary at the end of the current (2025-2026) session and invited anyone interested in the position to informally contact him.** Possible suggestions for future hosting of the CSDG talks webpages and paper archive of talks going back to 1996 were invited and also possible places to donate any funds held by CSDG in the event of no-one coming forward and the group closing.

Treasurer's Accounts and Report 2024-2025: The CSDG started the year in October 2024 with £75.56 cash in addition to £255.38 (plus interest) in the Cambridge Building Society. The table below shows the financial activity during the most recent year of talks (Oct24 to Apr25).

Expenditure		**Income**	

Speakers' expenses and account update	£56.73	Balance at Sep 2024	£75.56
Added to Bank a/c		Subscriptions	£46.00

Amended cash balance at 1st October 2024 £75.56 (NB: £14 more than incorrectly recorded at 2023-2024 AGM), cash remaining 1st October 2025 £64.83.
There is now £252.69 (plus interest) in a Community account at the Cambridge Building Society. The account holders are Peter Watson (current chair & secretary) and Adam Wagner (current treasurer). These names can be changed on application. The principle holder is the treasurer. Any of the account holders can deposit and withdraw money.

It is suggested subscriptions remain at £1 for the 2025-2026 session.

Election of officers and committee:. Committee for 2025-2026: *chair* & *secretary* Peter Watson; *treasurer* Adam Wagner; *officio* vacant; *ordinary* Haidee Philpott, Jayantha Ratnayake, Tony Sabin.

Any Other Business: The secretary suggested that in the event of the winding up of the group that remaining funds in the CSDG bank account at the end of the current 2025-2026 session are given to the Royal Statistical Society. He also mentioned the CSDG archive is now available to view at https://archive.org/details/@peter_c_watson